July 30, 2025

To:
Dean Mike Roy
Davis Family Library
Middlebury College

Subject: Sign at the Library

Dear Dean Roy,

We are Level 4 students in the School of Hebrew here at Middlebury. As part of our program, we frequently use the Davis Family Library and greatly appreciate all the work you and your team do. The library is a special and welcoming place on campus, and we are pleased to see that it includes a collection of Hebrew books.

In our class, we have been studying the linguistic landscape in public spaces. During a recent visit to the library, we explored signs in various languages and noticed one sign in particular on the entrance level. This sign displays the word “library” in several languages, and we’ve attached a photo of it to this letter. We truly appreciate the idea of experiencing the library “in your own language,” but we were surprised to see that Hebrew is not included. We feel the sign could be made more inclusive, and as part of a class project, we wrote this letter in Hebrew.

The linguistic landscape is important to us because it highlights the presence—and absence—of different voices in public spaces. It reflects the values and culture of a community. When we saw that Hebrew was missing from the sign, we felt that our language—and by extension, our presence—was not represented at Davis Library. The omission of Hebrew is troubling at any time. Hebrew is an ancient language whose alphabet forms the basis of many writing systems around the world. In today’s climate—particularly with the current rise in antisemitism globally and on college campuses—this absence feels especially poignant. We believe that including Hebrew would help create a greater sense of comfort and belonging for Jewish students on campus.

We noticed that the sign includes every other language taught at the Middlebury Language Schools—except Hebrew. At the same time, we were glad to see that Hebrew is represented on the library’s website. One of the central values in our class is linguistic justice, meaning that every language in a shared space deserves both visibility and representation. We believe it is important for all official campus signage to reflect the full linguistic and cultural diversity of the Language Schools community, so that every student and every group feels recognized. Moreover, each of us has taken the Language Pledge to use only our target language, including when using the library. Yet the Hebrew School is not acknowledged on this sign.

In conclusion, we respectfully recommend that the Hebrew word for library—**"סִפְרִיָּה (sifriah)"**—be added to the official sign. We would be happy to speak with you further about this.

With sincere appreciation,
Level 4 Class, School of Hebrew